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Hussainabad Imambara

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LUCKNOW



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Gateway on way to Hussainabad

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Introduction

Lucknow, capital of Uttar Pradesh, the most populous State in the Indian Union, is about 300 miles to the south-east of Delhi. Its population is not large—500,000 according to the last census—and it is not industrialised like the neighbouring city of Kanpur. Lucknow, however, has the reputation of being one of the most “interesting” cities of India.

Situated on the river Gomti, a tributary of the Ganga, Lucknow retains an old-world spaciousness. The casuarina-flanked river banks, the avenues lined with laburnums and tamarinds and the innumerable parks and gardens provide a lovely background for a city which has an interesting history. Because of its past, Lucknow’s culture and art show a subtle fusion of both sophistication and emotional warmth, of formal brilliance and innate tenderness. In Lucknow, Hindus and Muslims came together to create a city with a distinct *style*, which was reflected in the elegant Urdu spoken by its citizens, in their distinguished manners and, above all, in the art of assimilating the new into the old. It is this all-pervasive spirit of harmony rather than any singular material achievement which is the great attraction of Lucknow.

History

The city is said to have derived its name from Lakshman, brother of the epic hero, Ram. Some trace the origin of the name to a Hindu architect named Lakhna who was employed by the Muslim rulers of Jaunpur to build medieval Lucknow. It came into prominence with the disintegration of the Mughal Empire, when adventurers began to carve out principalities for themselves. Such an adventurer was Muhammed Amin Saadat Khan. Appointed Governor of Oudh in 1724, he became the founder of a long line of rulers known to history as Nawab-Wazirs. The British annexed the state in 1856 and deported the last of the Nawabs—Wajid Ali Shah—to Calcutta.

The designer and maker of modern Lucknow was the third Nawab, Asafuddaula (1775-1798). Lucknow's fame as a citadel of Urdu poetry, courtly diction and fine living dates back to the late eighteenth century. The Nawab's court then tended to rival the decaying imperial court in Delhi. Poets and philosophers, soldiers of fortune and beautiful courtesans flocked to the rising provincial capital.

During the War of Independence of 1857, Lucknow was besieged by the freedom fighters. Scarred walls and ruins scattered over the city are reminiscent of that event. Subsequently it became the capital of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh. With the influx of government offices, the establishment of a large military centre and the development of educational and cultural institutions, the city grew rapidly. In recent

years, Lucknow has expanded far beyond its original confines.

Places of Interest

Time has not had much chance to destroy old Lucknow, as most of its palaces were constructed towards the end of the eighteenth century and in the early nineteenth. Even today the law-courts, the museum, Raj Bhavan and many of the schools and laboratories occupy buildings which once belonged to the Nawabs. In the heart of Lucknow, people live in their ancestral dwellings, each with an interesting history. There is no sharp contrast between the old and the new. Those keen to savour something of the past will find it almost everywhere in the city. That is part of Lucknow's peculiar charm.

The architecture, a blend of many styles, is not always happy. It is a provincial variant of the Indo-

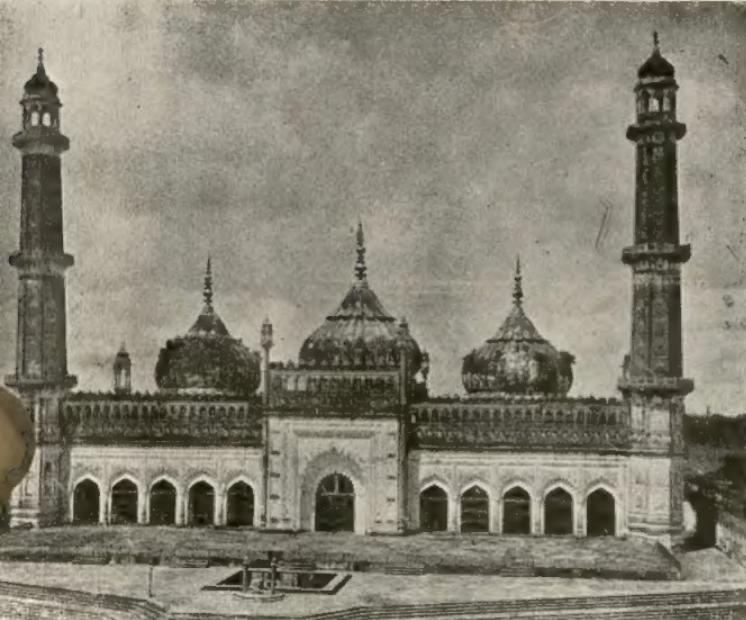
The Bada Imambara



Muslim pattern and makes up with embellishments and flourishes what it lacks in essential beauty. The European architects employed by the Nawabs of Lucknow added to the motley of architectural designs. Although the city does not possess architectural treasures, several of its buildings have a distinctive character.

The Bada Imambara—In the oldest part of the city to the west of the river, stands the *Bada* (or Great) *Imambara*, to be distinguished from a smaller one. An *imambara* is a building in which the festival of Moharram is celebrated and religious services are held in commemoration of the death of Ali and his sons, Hassan and Hussain. The Great *Imambara* was built by Nawab Asafuddaulah in 1784 to relieve distress caused by famine. This large and austere building was designed by the architect, Kifayatullah. Its main hall, over

A royal masjid near the Bada Imambara

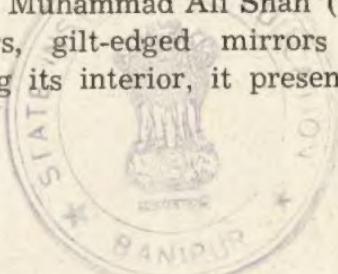


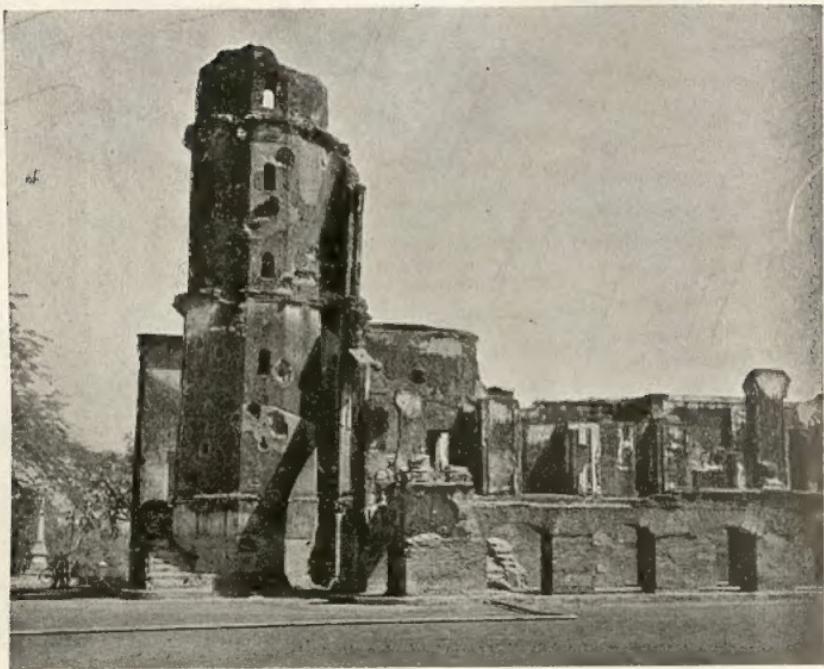


Rumi Darwaza (centre); clock tower (left); and the river Gomti (right background)

50 feet in height, is very impressive. The absence of any pillars or support makes it architecturally quite unique. The galleries and corridors above once formed a complicated labyrinth. From the terrace at the top one can have a fine view of the city, the minarets, domes and spires forming a striking sky-line.

The Chhota Imambara—To the west, in the same locality and beyond a fine gateway—Rumi Darwaza or the Turkish Gate—is a later and more ornate *imambara* built by Nawab Muhammad Ali Shah (1837-1842). With chandeliers, gilt-edged mirrors and colourful stucco adorning its interior, it presents a





The Residency

sharp contrast to the Bada Imambara. The Japanese garden has the dynastic emblem of two fish at the entrance and an imitation of the Taj Mahal, which is not in the best of tastes but makes the entire picture rather amusing.

The Picture Gallery—Adjoining the Chhota Imambara is an old palace, which contains portraits of all the Nawabs. The clock tower in the garden is a later addition, having been built in 1881.

The Residency—On the road which runs parallel to the river is the Residency, probably the best known of all the monuments in Lucknow. Constructed in

1800 for the British Resident, it was besieged by the freedom fighters in 1857 and in the course of the fight, it suffered some damage. It still bears scars of destruction and the traveller will be able to find many things of interest, including the *tah-khanas* (basement rooms)—a common feature of eighteenth-century buildings—the banquet halls and reception rooms. The garden is famous for its roses. The place is open throughout the week from “sunrise to half an hour after sunset.”

Kaiserbagh—Beyond the Residency towards the centre of the city is a group of interesting buildings. On either side of a park, with the statue of Sir Harcourt Butler, one of the Governors of the State, are rows of yellow buildings now used as apartment houses and which used to be Royal *harems*. Nearby

Tomb of Saadat Ali Khan





Shah Najaf contains the tomb of Ghaziuddin

are two tombs built for Nawab Saadat Ali Khan (1798-1814) and his beautiful wife, Khurshed Begum. Their beautifully proportioned domes and finials are amongst the best in Lucknow.

Khurshed Manzil (La Martiniere Girls' High School)—This European-style castle, near the State

Baradari





La Martiniere College □

Bank of India, was built for the beautiful begum who lies buried in Kaiserbagh. Its foreign architecture was the result of a fashion started by the Frenchman, Claude Martin. The palace, with turrets, battlements, a moat and draw-bridges, is built after the medieval castles of Europe. It was first used as a school in 1876.

Shah Najaf—A big white-domed building close to the Girls' Martiniere is the tomb of Nawab Ghaziuddin Haider (1814-1827) and his favourite wife. The interior is decorated with chandeliers and floral designs and the tombs are of solid silver and gold.

La Martiniere College for Boys—On the eastern outskirts of the city, near the military cantonment, is the famous palace designed by General Claude Martin and completed in 1795. Martin was a fabulous figure who came to India to try his luck with the French East India Company and rose to be a trusted General in the British army. He did well in



The main Railway Station, Lucknow

The Council House



business also. He left the bulk of his enormous fortune for founding three schools at Lucknow, Calcutta and his native city of Lyons. The visitor will find the architecture of the building, which has gargoyles and corinthian capitals, Roman arches and oriental terraces, somewhat bewildering. The extensive grounds and the school chapel are worth exploring. The school derives its name from its motto : "Labor et Constantia".

Modern Buildings—The new buildings are designed to fit in with the old. The traveller will find the huge Railway Station in Rajasthani style, and the Council Chamber, the General Post Office and the Radio Station of interest.

Parks and Gardens

Lucknow always used to emulate the imperial capital, Delhi. The Nawabs took special pride in their gardens and orchards. Among the many gardens which have given Lucknow the title "City of Gardens" are the following.

Sikandar Bagh—This was originally planned by the last of the Nawabs for his favourite wife, in whose honour it was named. It was completely devastated in 1857. The British made it a provincial horticultural garden. In April 1953, it was taken over by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research for development as the first National Botanical Garden of India. Its herbarium, fern-houses and nurseries as well as its excellent facilities for research attract experts from all over the world. The casual traveller will find the

garden with its rose beds, smooth lawns and fountains a welcome retreat.

Banarasi Bagh—Lucknow is proud of its open-air zoological garden, *the Prince of Wales Zoological Garden*, in which tigers and lions are allowed to roam about in specially designed cages to resemble their natural habitation. There are many prize specimens in the zoo, including a rhinoceros from Assam, panthers, elephants and monkeys. The beautiful garden was once a part of a palace and has some pieces of quaint French statuary. The place is open from 5 a.m. to 11 p.m. in summer and 5-30 a.m. to 9 p.m. in winter. Cars are allowed only between 6-30 and 10-30 a.m. and 3-30 and 5 p.m.

Dilkusha—This garden is near the Boys' Martiniere. Originally the Nawabs' hunting lodge, it was severely damaged during the war of 1857. The ruins, eucalyptus groves and a well-planned garden make it a popular picnic spot.

Educational, Scientific and Cultural Institutions

Lucknow is well known as an educational centre. It has over 50 secondary schools, 3 women's colleges, 6 men's colleges, one of the best medical colleges in the country and a university. The Municipal Library has a fine collection of manuscripts, and the State Museum is growing rapidly. In recent years, many new laboratories, clinics, hospitals and research institutes have been built in the city.

Lucknow University—The campus is located across the river in what was once the royal garden.

While not much remains of its past glory, the visitor can see the *hamam* (bathing place), where the Nawab used to come with his ladies, and a red building known as the *baradari*. The University acquired the estate in 1905. Since 1864, when the first college was founded, the University has expanded greatly. The present enrolment figure for the five Faculties of Arts, Science, Commerce, Law and Medicine is over 5,000. The Library, named after the famous poet, Rabindranath Tagore, has 125,000 volumes, and the visitor will enjoy the art gallery and museum upstairs.

The Medical College across the river is located near the Bada Imambara. Even those who are not interested in the institution will find its garden exquisite.

Isabella Thoburn College for Women—This famous women's college was established in 1870 as a high school for girls by an American Methodist mis-

The University



sionary, Miss Isabella Thoburn. It was raised to the status of a college in 1886 and was later affiliated to the University of Lucknow. The library and the chapel are particularly interesting.

Bhatkhande University of Indian Music—Founded in 1926, this institution provides instruction in classical music. It is named after Pandit Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande, one of the greatest musicians of India. The University trains some 350 men and women in the theory and practice of North Indian vocal and instrumental music and dance. It has done valuable work in revitalising both.

Government School of Arts and Crafts—Adjoining the University is the State-aided arts school. With Sri Ashit Haldar as Principal, the institution achieved national importance and attracted artists from all over the land. Students learn drawing, painting and sculpture as well as pottery-making and metal work in the

Chhattar Manzil (left)



school. A section in the school assists the Government in improving cottage industries.

The Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeobotany—The Institute was founded in memory of Dr. Birbal Sahni, who died in 1949. Educated at Lahore and Cambridge, Dr. Sahni was one of India's great scientists. He attained international fame for his research in botany. The Institute has a unique museum.

Central Drug Research Institute—One of the twelve national laboratories established by the Union Government, it is housed in the magnificent *Chhattar Manzil* (Umbrella Palace), so called from the gilded umbrella over the dome. Its beautiful site overlooking the river, its fabulous furnishings and lofty halls made it the premier palace of the State. During the British period, it was occupied by the United Services Club. The palace was taken over by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research in 1950. Though many modifications and alterations have been made, the facade remains untouched. The Institute has an extensive programme for testing and standardising drugs.

Clay toys of Lucknow





Clay models of toy fruits

There are several other research institutions in Lucknow such as the Central Veterinary Laboratory and the Buildings and Roads Research Station. Those interested may visit them by appointment with the Directors concerned.

State Museum—The State museum, established in 1863, has four main divisions, namely, archaeological, anthropological, natural history and art. The archaeological section contains pieces of sculpture from Mathura as well as Brahminical and Jain statuary. The coin cabinet, which has Kushana, Gupta and Mughal coins, is of special importance. The art collection includes paintings representing the major schools—Kangra, Rajput, Deccani and Mughal. The museum is open on all days except Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Shops and Shopping

Like many old cities, Lucknow can still boast of its indigenous cottage industries and skilled crafts. Their products are available in the local markets.

Hazratgunj—This is Lucknow's modern market, on the main thoroughfare of the city. The most important shop for the traveller is the U.P. Government's Handicrafts Emporium. Like its counterparts elsewhere in the country, the Emporium has the largest selection of the State's arts and crafts. These

include Banaras brocades and silks, Farrukhabad prints, Mirzapur carpets, Moradabad brassware, Khurja pottery, Lucknow and Agra embroidery and Almora woollens. It is a convenient place to get acquainted with the kinds of things Uttar Pradesh can offer. It is open every day, excepting Sundays and Government holidays, from 10 a.m. to 8-30 p.m.

Another shop along the same road is the *Gandhi Ashram*, one of the several establishments all over the country to popularise hand-spun and hand-woven cloth, use of which was advocated by Mahatma Gandhi. Here one can buy gaily-coloured prints, finest silks, rough woollen materials and leather goods as well as Gandhian literature.

The Kashmir Government has one of its many handicrafts emporia in Hazratgunj. For those who cannot go to Kashmir, this place offers a variety of Kashmir products, such as carpets, shawls, silks, forgettes, furs, wood carvings and papier mache articles.

Aminabad—From Kaiserbagh, two parallel roads lead to the heart of the city and the busiest market of Lucknow, Aminabad. Along its crowded streets one can buy almost anything. The market is busiest in the evening, when jostling crowds, vendors and honking cars vie with the temple bells in an exciting cacophony.

Lucknow is famous for its perfumes and distilled essences known as *ittar*. These cannot be used as lavishly as western scents, and are dabbed in cotton

wool and applied sparingly. Each season and occasion has its special scent. Amongst the well-known perfumes are *khus*, made from a special grass, *Lady of the Night*, and a unique decoction that smells of wet earth.

There are many shops which sell typical Lucknow products like gold and silver thread, called *zari*, spiced tobacco and betel-nuts, sandals, glass bangles, silver jewellery, embroidered silks and cottons.

Chowk—This is the oldest and was once the most famous market of Lucknow. Today it is a narrow lane with two gates at either end built by the Mughal Emperors, Akbar and Jehangir. At one time, it used to be the centre of art and music, for the famous courtesans used to have their salons in the neighbourhood and the feudal aristocracy made it their favourite haunt. The oldest families of the city still live in its alleys and the core of *nawabi* manners persists among the dwellers of the Chowk.

On either side of the narrow lane are ateliers where artisans make all kinds of things from beaten silver to fancy hubble-bubbles. The retail merchants are often themselves entrepreneurs. Since the street is narrow, cars are not allowed to enter it after 6 p.m. The best time for shopping is early evening.

The Chowk is the best place for buying Lucknow handicrafts, the most famous being *chikan*, white embroidery work generally done on white cotton. The designs and motifs follow traditional patterns —mango leaf, elephant and fish. One can buy almost anything from embroidered sarees and blouse pieces to shirts, table linen and children's clothes

Silver and gold embroidery, another speciality of Lucknow, is generally not done on ready-made garments, but scarves and borders are available. Lucknow now specialises in heavy silver jewellery such as thick necklaces, anklets and ear-rings. Both Aminabad and Chowk are closed on Thursdays but open on Sundays.

Nakhas—This bazaar, next to the Chowk, is of no great commercial interest but it is the closest thing to a weekly fair that Lucknow still possesses. Every Sunday rag-and-bone men and dealers in second-hand goods pile their wares on the pavements and call out the bargains of the day. The watchful buyer can pick up bits of crude pottery—earthen pitchers and vases—and brass and copper cooking utensils at very low prices.

Entertainment

Should the traveller find himself in Lucknow during an important festival such as Muharram, Divali or Dusserah, he can always attend one of the many celebrations organised during these festivals. At other times there are the traditional forms of entertainment, apart from the modern ones such as the cinema.

A traditional type of entertainment is the musical soiree that usually lasts throughout the night. Lucknow is the home of light classical music called *Dadra*. The Bhatkhande University gives concerts and demonstrations. The music broadcast by the Lucknow-

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station of All India Radio gives a good idea of the standard of music in Lucknow.

Dance recitals are not common, but are occasionally given by great exponents of the *Kathak* style, such as Shambhu Maharaj. The *Kathak* is the most important dance form of Northern India. It derives its inspiration from the Radha-Krishna legends. It is a rare combination of intricate footwork, in which the dancer reproduces the exact rhythm played on the *tabla* (Indian drums), and the delicate gestures (*mudras*) and mime which express all the moods of love.

A very sophisticated form of entertainment is the *mushaira*, where Urdu poets congregate in the midst of an appreciative audience to recite their verses and extemporise on one another's lines. Similarly, at a *kavi sammelan*, which means a gathering of poets, Hindi poets recite their poems. Although the traveller may not be able to understand the language, he should not miss an opportunity of listening to this form of literary expression which is now almost dead in the Western countries.

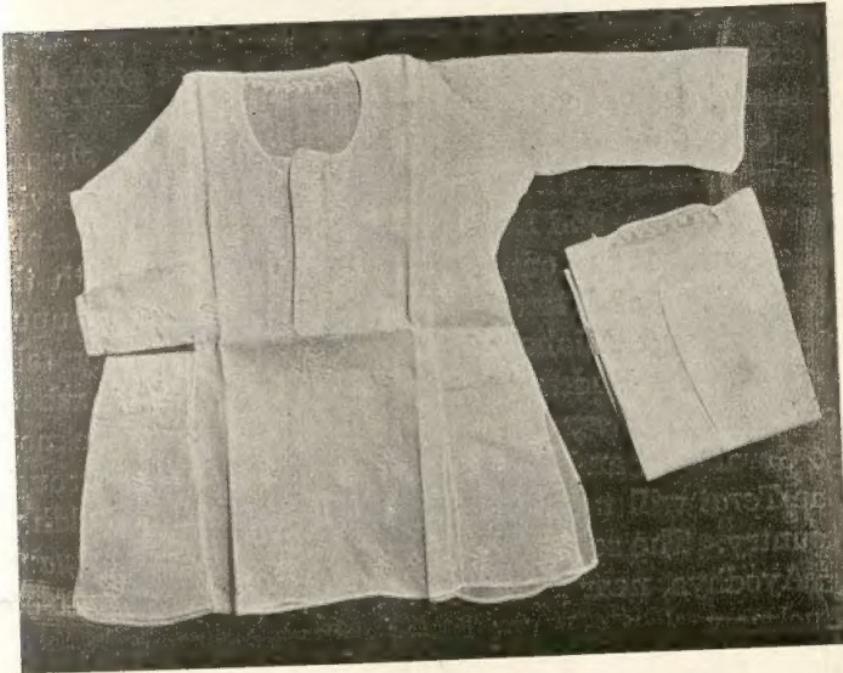
Among the more popular traditional pastimes are *cock-fighting* and *kite-flying* during winter, religious discourses (*kathas*) and the shows of itinerant jesters (*Bhands*) whose bawdy wit often contains ironical observations on life and manners.

Cuisine in Lucknow

While it is true that palates get acclimatised slowly, it would be a pity if the traveller were to leave the city without tasting the delicacies for which Lucknow is

famous. Noted for its special brand of Mughal food, Lucknow gourmets have a wide selection of spiced meats, curries and special kinds of bread. Amongst the favourite preparations are *biriani pullau* (rice cooked with meat, nuts and spices), *Murg musallam* (roast chicken) and *kakori kababs* (cigar-shaped meat pieces which simply melt in the mouth). Most restaurants will have these on their menus. Lucknow is also famous for its sweets, made from a special preparation of cream called *balai*. Melons and mangoes are plentiful in summer.

Samples of chikan work



General Information

Climate—Like most cities in the Gangetic Valley, Lucknow has an extreme climate. It is hot and dry in summer and cold in winter. From November to February, the maximum temperature rarely exceeds 65°F, while at night the temperature falls to 45°F. The traveller should bring warm clothing and a light topcoat.

Hotels—There are two good western-style hotels as well as many Indian-style hotels. Liquor is available in Lucknow. Bars are attached to most hotels and restaurants.

Transport—While there is no regular taxi service in the city, there are taxis at the railway station and the major hotels. There is a regular bus service connecting important places in the city. Then there are the horse-drawn *tongas* and the man-powered cycle-rickshaws. Rates are not fixed and these should be settled in advance.

Communications—Lucknow is on the main air and railway routes. There is a regular morning air service between Delhi and Lucknow and between Calcutta and Lucknow. It is connected by road and rail with the other cities of Uttar Pradesh such as Agra, Kanpur, Banaras and Allahabad. Those interested may take a trip to the Buddha's birthplace and the place where he attained *nirvana*. A night's journey from Lucknow to Gorakhpur and then a lovely journey by car through the *Terai* will take one into the heart of the Buddha's country. The scene of the famous epic, the *Ramayana*, is Ayodhya, near Fyzabad, some 80 miles by car from Lucknow.

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